



The Post-Simulation Debate

Twenty minutes, sides crossed against what they argued. Converts a debrief from recollection into argument.

College and high school.

Take the central question the simulation turned on, assign sides deliberately crossed against what students argued during the exercise, and run twenty minutes. It is the most underused of the five exercises and the most distinctive.

It solves a specific problem. Asked what happened, students narrate. Asked to argue, they analyze. It also works where a discussion has stalled, because a debate supplies the thing a tired room lacks, which is a reason to speak.

When to use it

- **When the goal is understanding an opposing viewpoint.** This is the straightest route to it. Be honest about what you are claiming: in the one study that tested this directly, the result was tentative and measured indirectly, through shifts in students' own positions toward the positions they had been assigned. It is a goal worth holding, not an effect to promise.
- **When one side won comfortably.** The winning coalition has learned the least and is least able to state the other case.
- **Not when the room is raw.** De-role first, or run it a day later.

Running order

0-2	Name the central question. Announce the reversal: everyone who argued for it is now against it.
2-10	Preparation with the new side. One rule, stated now: you may not use an argument you heard this morning.
10-18	Four minutes a side.
18-22	Two minutes of rebuttal each.
22-25	One person per side names the single strongest point the other side made. Not a concession. The strongest thing they said.

Script

“We are going to argue the thing itself now, and you do not get your own side. [Name the central question.] Everyone who argued for it during the simulation is now against it. You have eight minutes with your new side to build the best case you can. One rule: you may not use an argument you heard this morning. Find a better one.”

“Four minutes a side, then two minutes of rebuttal, then I want one person from each side to tell me the single strongest point the other side made. Not a concession. Just the strongest thing they said. If you cannot name one, you were not listening, and that is the actual lesson of this exercise.”

The two rules that make it work

- **No argument you heard this morning.** Without it, students recycle the briefs they were given and nothing new is produced. With it, they have to build the case themselves, which is the point.
- **Name the other side’s strongest point, and it may not be a concession.** Students will try to satisfy this by naming the weakest thing the opposition said, or by conceding something costless. Push back once in front of everyone and the standard holds for the rest of the term.

Variations

- **Sixty seconds, no sides.** Where you lack twenty minutes: each student gives the strongest version of the position they spent the day opposing. A student who cannot do it discovers in public that they did not understand what they were arguing against.
- **Written, as the fourth AP free-response task.** The argument essay is this exercise on paper.
- **Judged by the students who had no stake.** Observers, chairs and note-takers vote and say why. It gives a job to the roles that spoke least during the simulation itself.

What to watch for

Somebody has to lose, and the reversal means a student may lose twice in one day. Say at the start that the debate is not graded and that the point is the final question, not the verdict. Then actually spend the last three minutes on the final question, or the class will conclude you meant the verdict after all.